



Crate Training in 4 Steps



If you decide crate training is the right choice for your family, there are 4 steps to get started.

1 Choose a crate type. There are three basic types of crates: wire, plastic and mesh. Which crate is best will depend on your pet. Some dogs feel more comfortable in the darker, den-like feel of the airline crate while other dogs prefer the openness of the wire crate.

2 Size it right. Whichever type you choose, the crate should be large enough that the puppy or dog can stand up fully, turn around, and lie down completely on its side.

3 Introduce your pet to the crate. A puppy or dog should be introduced to the crate slowly. There are 4 stages to the initiation process.

Leave the door open. Start by placing the crate inside a pen with the door open. This allows your pet to explore the crate without having to be locked in it. Put a bed inside the crate and periodically leave toys and treats inside to encourage your puppy or dog to go in.

Do not close the door at first. Let the puppy or dog explore in and out at will. When it freely goes into the crate, begin to close the crate door for very short periods of time.

Use incentives. When you first start closing the door, give the puppy or dog its meal or some other enrichment such as a stuffed food toy so it learns that good things happen when the door is closed. Initially when you close the door, stay in sight so your pet can see you.

Extend closed-door periods. Over time, gradually keep the crate door closed for longer periods. When your puppy or dog is comfortable with the door closed for several minutes, you can begin to briefly step out of sight.

Crates can be a beneficial tool for both you and your pet by:

- Allowing for a more effective housetraining protocol for puppies
- Keeping puppies from doing undesirable actions while unsupervised
- Giving your pet its own space where it can escape the hubbub of activity in the house or the unwanted attention of certain individuals
- Providing a safe way to travel if you drive with your puppy or dog
- Giving your pet a familiar place if you stay somewhere overnight

4 Don't crate for too long. There is no definitive standard on what is too long to crate your pet at one time or the total number of hours per day. Standard housetraining guidelines suggest that puppies be crated for no longer than one hour per month of age plus one. For adult dogs, crating durations for six hours or less are ideal in terms of welfare even though many adult dogs seem to handle crating for eight or more hours.

How long it takes to acclimate your puppy or dog to a crate will depend on your pet and how methodically you implement gradual confinement. If you have difficulty with the training, or your pet shows significant distress in the crate, seek assistance from your veterinarian or behavior consultant.